



WELCOME

WELCOME to our first Avon-Otakaro Network (AvON) Newsletter.

This will be one of the main ways we will let you know what we are up to. We hope you enjoy reading about what we are doing.

LADY ISAAC, PATRON



DIANA, LADY ISAAC, a stalwart of Christchurch conservation and heritage, has become the patron of AvON.

With her late husband Sir Neil Isaac she founded and built The Isaac Construction Co Limited and created The Isaac Conservation and Wildlife Trust, which manages Peacock Springs Wildlife Park.

Lady Isaac was influential in creating the Isaac Lakes in the Clearwater development and was behind the restoration of the Isaac Theatre Royal. The Isaac Wildlife Trust also offers several scholarships in geography, environmental science and conservation at Canterbury and Lincoln Universities

She said she was delighted to accept the role of patron of AvON.

"This project is so dear to my heart and closely aligned with my own conservation interests" she said.

We are delighted to have her on board!

PETITION

"We respectfully ask the House of Representatives to work with the people and local authorities of Christchurch to ensure that the Avon River red zone becomes a reserve and river park when the home owners have to leave."

THE PETITION to the House of Representatives has now closed and been presented to Parliament.



Peggy Kelly at work hand stitching the first volume of the petition.

There has been a tremendous response, with the final signature count over **18,500!**

Peggy Kelly and her team have invested much tender loving care in the binding of the petitions into two beautiful volumes.

"People went to great lengths to gather signatures and to take the time to sign. It is therefore only fitting that the petition is presented in a way that respects this effort and the wishes of the people," said Peggy.

AvON handed the petition to MPs Lianne Dalziel and Eugenie Sage on the steps of Parliament on Wednesday 2 May. The petition made a symbolic journey up the river on 1 May – see picture story in the ****STOP PRESS**** section.

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BERNIE'S CRAYFISH POTS

AS MANY ALREADY KNOW, BERNIE CALDER was a super-star when it came to collecting signatures. He collected many thousands of our final total.

It is appropriate then that his is the first name on the first page of volume one of the completed forms.

Not as well known is the method Bernie used to net his signatures. He carried out an intensive campaign in fish and chip shops across the city.

He set up signature gathering stations including a visual stand featuring our pamphlet on each counter to draw attention to the petition, and checked and collected completed forms regularly.

In between these forays into the suburbs to check his signature gathering stations he would often take time out up the Kaikoura coast in his caravan posie to be near his crayfish pots.

Talking with him one day about this, Co-chair Mark Gibson suggested to him that his signature stations had been inspired by his crayfishing. And that there was even a synergy with the fish and chip shop catchment. They had a good laugh about that one.





RIVER of FLOWERS

ON 22 FEBRUARY, at the River of Flowers events, thousands of people marked the first anniversary of the most devastating earthquake to hit Christchurch. AvON and Healthy Christchurch organised the 15 riverside memorials to give people a chance to mark the day in their own way and with their own community.

Throughout the day, people brought flowers to drop in the river and wrote messages for a Tree of Hope.

At midday local community groups hosted the sites. At 12:51, we held two minutes' silence and then released red helium-filled biodegradable balloons. Rowers, kayakers and dragon boaters added to the occasion on the lower Avon, organised by our sport and recreation supporters.

The community response was tremendous and the occasion was very significant for thousands of people. It was a great opportunity for local communities to feel part of something bigger.

People from across our city connected with each other, and shared their experiences and hopes for the future.

Mike Moss from Avon Loop Planning Association, which hosted the Ō-Tautahi site at Barbadoes Bridge, said, "We had a steady flow of people, with around 250 gathering for the two minutes' silence. All day there were flowers passing by from the hospital site."

Jacque, who attended the Riverside event at Medway Street, found it "very moving. When all the contractors drove up in their trucks on the other river bank and got out and gathered as a group, that was a special moment...and when the piper played 'Amazing Grace'."

We are giving all the messages of hope to the CEISMIC Digital Archive – an archive of video, audio, documents and images related to the Canterbury earthquakes of 2010 and 2011.

CROSS WASHES ASHORE

LATE IN 2011 the Wider Earthquake Communities Action Network, or WeCan!, led a rally outside the office of CERA which featured a giant multi-coloured wooden cross.

This was lashed to the munted Medway Street footbridge for the Riverside River of Flowers event, but was cast into the river by vandals the next day before it could be returned.

Miraculously when Bernie Calder was out walking on the Southshore beach on Easter Sunday he came across it. The cross had started its journey on the first day of Lent and then washed ashore on Easter Sunday.

Once returned to Rev Mike Coleman, Chair of WeCan!, he commented: "the river has had a blessing – it needs to be a park now mate!"

RED ZONE ASSET REGISTER

WE WANT YOU to let us know about valuable buildings, trees or other structures in the Avon River Red Zone before demolition gets beyond the point of no return.

Some residents have told us about old and valuable trees they don't want torn out. Others know about buildings or structures that are historically important or have played a central role in the community.

We want to know about all of them! Then we can make sure CERA knows about these treasures before it starts demolishing them.

We hope CERA will save some of the assets, at least while it discusses their future. Others might be moved, and some which cannot be saved will at least be recorded for posterity.

Examples of assets include community meeting places, gardens or halls; trees or plants; buildings or even gateposts or signs. They can be on private or public land. You can register "valuable assets" online through our website, www.avon.org.nz

Demolitions are well underway – so there is some urgency here!





GREAT AVON RIVER WALK

AROUND FIFTY PEOPLE participated in the Great Avon River Walk in some capacity.

Forty took part as pilgrims, walking anything from the whole river, (7 people) to a few hundred metres. Others met us along the way to provide encouragement, sustenance or inspiration.

Our route followed the river all the way to Manchester Street where we needed to circumnavigate the CBD red-zone for a few blocks until reaching Worcester Street.

After Little Hagley Park we came and went from the river as it flows mostly through private properties. We clung to the bank as much as we could defying security fences at Girls High, connecting up with Mona Vale and sidling around cricket matches being played on Boys High fields.

The full walk had the sense of passing through five distinct stages:

1. The estuarine mouth and lower reaches.
2. The residential red-zone.
3. The CBD.
4. The public space of Hagley Park.
5. The privatised upper reaches with intermittent public reserves.

This was shared at the South Brighton jetty just before we began walking:

We give thanks for this river and the life and beauty that it constantly gives to our city.

As we walk along beside it today may our love and respect for it grow, and may we listen deeply to what it has to say.

May our journey be a true adventure of the Spirit where we discover deeper meaning for our lives, and life-giving connection with each other.

May each one of us walk with a spirit of hospitality and gratitude and may all our footsteps be gentle on the earth.

**Date for Diary: Next AvON Forum
6:30pm, Tuesday 5 June**

ESTUARY SURVEY

RECENTLY MICHELLE MARQUET of Lincoln University undertook a research project entitled "What's in the Water? Water Perceptions at the Avon-Heathcote Estuary Ihutai". AvON helped promote the on-line survey used.

The recreationists who responded were found to be well-informed about the sources and risks of water contamination and used a broad range of insights and information sources to make an evaluation of whether or not to enter the water.

The final report will be published at www.estuary.org.nz.

AvON's STRUCTURE

HERE IS A SIMPLE OUTLINE of how our network is structured. (You'll find more detail on our website.)

AvON is an umbrella network of the many different interests that share a vision for an Avon River Park, as set out in the AvON Charter.

You can become a member of AvON as an individual by registering on our website, or as an organisation by endorsing our charter. We meet every quarter in a forum, which is open to all members.

Our strategic steering group provides overall leadership. This group meets each fortnight and includes people from all the main interest groups.

It is the 'guardian' of the AvON vision and is responsible for helping the many different projects integrate their aims to achieve as many benefits as possible.

We also have reference groups of members who share a common interest. There are groups for biodiversity and water; sport and recreation; heritage, arts and culture; community gardens; community wellbeing; and tourism and economic recovery.

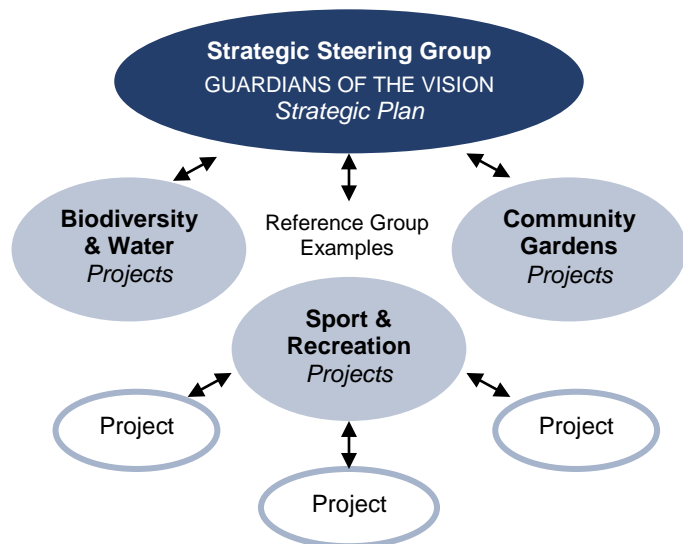
These groups help set up or carry out projects within their particular realm of interest. Each group is represented in the strategic steering group which supports all projects contributing to the AvON vision.

Projects are often fully managed by autonomous member organisations while still falling within the general framework of the Network.

AvON also has an administration group and groups for special projects such as the petition.

If you would like to join one of the reference groups or have an idea for a project, please contact us as follows:

- biodiversity@avon.org.nz
- gardens@avon.org.nz
- heritage@avon.org.nz
- recreation@avon.org.nz
- tourism@avon.org.nz
- wellbeing@avon.org.nz





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Co-Chair Mark Gibson with Councillor Rev Glenn Livingstone who blessed the petition as it began its journey at Christchurch Yacht Club

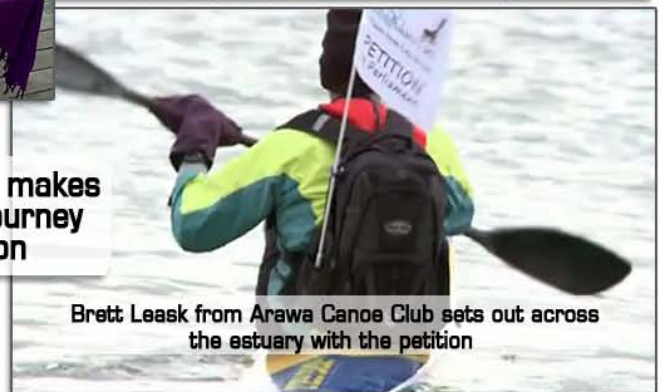


Councillor, the Very Reverend Peter Beck blesses the petition as Co-Chair Evan Smith looks on



The journey begins on the old kauri launch 'Rapanui' - out to Rapanui / Shag Rock then back upstream

May 1: Petiton makes its symbolic journey up the Avon



Brett Leask from Arawa Canoe Club sets out across the estuary with the petition



St Margaret's College rowing quad head upstream from New Brighton boat ramp



Abreast of Life Dragon Boaters continue the journey from Kerrs Reach to Swanns Road



At Te Wai Pure o Tautahi (Cambridge Green) the Harriers are greeted by members of Te Runaka ki Otautahi o Kai Tahu and the petition blessed by Rev Maurice Gray



Under the munted Medway St foot bridge



Methodist Harriers follow the river from Swanns Road through the CBD to the Peace Bell at the Botanic Gardens





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Hagley College students ring the Peace Bell to start their leg of the journey through Hagley Park



The walk through the Botanic Gardens. Avon-Oakaro River Park: a legacy for future generations



Jase and Mesha reach the end of the walk followed by fellow travellers



Time for the cyclists to take over on the trek westward



Professor Bryan Jenkins addresses the cyclists at Okeover Garden (University of Canterbury)



Dr Matt Morris describes how Okeover garden is a great model for the AvON vision



Cyclists are greeted at Crosbie Park with a haka!



Peter Mason kaumatua of Nga Hau e Wha marae offers his blessing to the petition in Crosbie Park, Avonhead



May 2: The Petition is handed over to MPs from Labour, Greens and National on the steps of Parliament by Allan and Helen Campbell and Co-Chair Mark Gibson. Lianne Dalziel then formally presented it to the House

******* A big THANK YOU to all those who participated in these events! *******

